

## Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, PINS, CM, EK, GB  
SUBJECT: FRENCH ROLE CENTRAL AFRICA: CAMEROON

REF: (A) LIBREVILLE 2621; (B) YAOUNDE 4702; (C) YAOUNDE 4632

1. WITH RESPECT RECENT TROOP MOVEMENTS, WHILE EMBASSY HAS NO DOUBT FRENCH AMBASSADOR GABON DELAUNEY "AFFIRMED CATEGORICALLY THAT NO SUCH (FRENCH) MOVEMENT (TOWARDS CAMEROONIAN BORDER) HAD TAKEN PLACE, (REFTEL A) BELIEVE WE WOULD BE DOING A DISSERVICE IF WE DID NOT REPORT THAT USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCE CLAIMS HAVE EYE-WITNESS REPORTS ON BOTH GABONESE AND FRENCH TROOP MOVEMENTS TOWARD CAMEROON BORDER. IT ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THESE MOVEMENTS PRIMARILY DIRECTED TOWARDS VOLATILE EQUATORIAL GUINEAN SITUATION, AND WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF CAMEROONIAN TROOP MOVEMENTS TOWARDS EG BORDER FROM CAMPO, BUT IN VIEW OF QUIXOTIC NATURE OF MEYO-KYE INCIDENT, BELIEVE CAMEROON HAS SOME BASIS CONCERN OVER ERRATIC BEHAVIOR GABONESE TROOPS. AFTER ALL, IT NOT NORMAL PRACTICE FOR ARMY TO SHOOT UPPOST FOR WHICH IT HAS NEGOTIATED PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

2. OF FAR MORE IMPORTANCE IS FRENCH ROLE FORMER FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES. WHILE WE ENJOY BASICALLY GOOD RELATIONS OUR FRENCH COUNTERPARTS, WE FIND THEM SOMEWHAT CONDESCENDING AND NOT EXTREMELY FORTHCOMING IN EXCHANGING HARD INFORMATION. THEY HAVE AT TIMES MISLED US WHEN IT HAS BEEN IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS TO DO SO. THE FRENCH TEND LOOK UPON US AS SOMEWHAT TOLERATED INTERLOPERS THEIR SPECIAL PRESERVE. WHILE THEY WILLING LET US ASSUME ADDITIONAL BURDENS DEVELOPMENT  
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ASSISTANCE, THEY WISH MAINTAIN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS HOST

GOVERNMENT. WHILE WE MAY SHARE COMMON GOAL OF STABILITY IN REGION, FOR FRENCH THIS BASICALLY STABILITY PROTECT FRENCH INTERESTS AND COMMON CULTURAL HERITAGE.

3. ALSO SHOULD BE NOTED FRENCH CAREFULLY SELECT WHAT THEY TELL US. FOR EXAMPLE, IT LIKELY AHIDJO MENTIONED RECENT DECLARATION CAIIN HIS TOUR D'HORIZON DUBOIS, BUT FRENCH AMBASSADOR MADE NO MENTION WHAT MUST BE EMBARRASSING SITUATION IN HIS REPORT OF AHIDJO CONVERSATION (YAOUNDE 4702). IN SHORT, ANYTHING WHICH POTENTIAL ADVERSE REFLECTION ON FRENCH COLONIAL TUTELAGE EITHER IGNORED OR DOESN'T EXIST AS FAR AS FRENCH CONCERNED.

4. HOWEVER, WE NOTE CAMEROONIAN DESIRE AT LEAST, IN SPITE MANY WHO WISH PRESERVE SPECIAL FRENCH RELATIONSHIP, DILUTE OVERDEPENDENCE ON FRENCH BY SEARCHING FOR ALTERNATIVES WITH US AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES. THUS, WHILE OUR INTERESTS MAY PARALLEL IN MANY WAYS, BELIEVE FRENCH DO HAVE SPECIAL ROLE VIS A VIS GABON AND CAMEROON WHICH THEY WISH TO PRESERVE FROM US SUPERPOWER DISPLACEMENT AND THAT THEIR INTERVENTION FORCES IN GABON MAY IN SOME RESPECTS BE A LIABILITY IN SO FAR AS GURC PERCIEVES ITS OWN VEST INTERSTS.

5. WHILE FRENCH VALUE AND ATTEMPT MAXIMIZE THEIR SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP FORMER FRENCH COLONIES, BELIEVE GURC AMONG LEADERS MODERATE FRANCOPHONE COUNTIRES IN ATTEMPTS DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM TOTAL DEPENDENCE FORMER METROPOLE. FOR EXAMPLE, GURC HAS FOLLOWED PUBLIC, DELIBERATE AND EXPLICIT POLICY OF DIVERSIFYING RELATIONS SO AS TO DIVORCE ITSELF FROM EXCLUSIVE DEPENDENCE ON FRANCH, ESPECIALLY IN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SPHERES. CAMEROON WAS FIRST MODERATE FRANCOPHONE COUNTRY TO REQUIRE RENEGOTIATION FRENCH COOPERATION AGREEMENTS, FRENCH AMBASSADOR SINCE 1972 NO LONGER DOYEN DIPLOMATIC CORPS, GURC HAS WITHDRAWN FROM OCAM AND WAS FIRST WITHDRAW FROM AIR AFRIQUE (A STEP GABON TAKING ONLY NOW, FIVE YEARS LATER). PRESIDENT AHIDJO, WHILE VISITING FRANCH PREVATELY ALMOST EVERY YEAR, ONLY LAST SUMMER PAID HIS FIRST STATE VISIT IN OVER DECADE. FRENCH HAVE ACCEPTED THIS, JUST AS THEY HAVE ACCEPTED MODEST US SECURITY ASSISTANCE ROLE GABON. WE ALSO HAVE FRANCO-AMERICAN COOPERATION IN JOINT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS, SUCH AS NORTH CAMEROON LIVESTOCK IMPROVEMENT. HOWEVER, MUST OBSERVE THERE FOUR ESSENTIAL

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CAMEROON AND GABON: 1) CAMEROON WAS FIRST LEAGUE OF NATIONS MANDATE AND LATER UNITED NATIONS TRUST TERRITORY; 2) CAMEROON IS OFFICIALLY AND CONSTITUTIONALLY BILINGUAL, WITH STRONG ANGLOPHONE TRADITION TWO-SEVENTHS OF COUNTRY; 3) GABON DOES HAVE ONE OF LAST VESTIGES OF FRENCH COLONIALISM BY HAVING FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTION FORCE; AND 4) AHIDJO CAME TO POWER THROUGH ELECTION AND HAS INSTITUTIONALIZED GOVERNMENT TO FUNCTION INDEPENDENT HIS PRESENCE.

6. WHILE GURC AND GOF MAY OFFICIALLY ACCEPT THIS PROGRESSIVE LOOSENING OF TRADITIONAL TIES, MUST POINT OUT FRENCH COMMERCIAL INTERESTS STILL, IN MANY RESPECTS, REGARD CAMEROON AS CHASSE GARDE (CLOSED PRESERVE). THIS ATTITUDE IN SPITE OF STATEMENTS TO CONTRARY BY PRIME MINISTER AND OTHER HIGH GURC OFFICIALS, DOES ADVERSELY AFFECT OUR EFFORTS SEEK MORE EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION AMERICAN COMMERCIAL INTERESTS. MOST AMERICAN FIRMS REPRESENTED BY LARGE FRENCH TRADING COMPANIES WHO, WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS (CATERPILLAR, CARRIER), HAVE US COMPANIES AS SECOND LINES EFFECTIVELY TO SMOTHER COMPETITION. HOWEVER, BELIEVE GURC LIBERAL INVESTMENT POLICY AND OUR EFFORTS GET FOOT IN DOOR, WILL EVENTUALLY BEAR FRUIT.

7. FINALLY, THERE IS THE ROLE THAT FRENCH MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES PLAY IN FORMER FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES. MUST NOTE THAT JACQUES FOCCART HAS SPECIAL ADVISORY ROLE PRESIDENT BONGO AND AHIDJO AND THAT MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES MAY HAVE MISSIONS WHICH NOT WHOLLY KNOWN OR COMPATIBLE WITH THOSE OF DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES.

8. OBVIOUS CONCLUSION IS THAT WHILE IT MAY BE USEFUL EXCHANGE INFO WITH FRENCH, WE HAVE FOUND THEY BASICALLY WISH GET MORE THAN THEY GIVE AND WE SOMETIMES SKEPTICAL THEY PLAY GAME IN SPIRIT MUTUAL GIVE AND TAKE, BUT WISH MANIPULATE EVERY SITUATION FOR THEIR OWN ADVANTAGE. HOWEVER, THEIR ABILITY MANIPULATE GURC MAY BE MORE CIRCUMSCRIBED (SEE PARA 5 ABOVE) THAN THEIR MANIPULATIVE CAPACITY GABON, BUT WE DEFER LIBREVILLE THIS SUBJECT.  
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